



STATE OF VERMONT
Department of Education
120 State Street
Montpelier, VT 05620-2501

VERMONT STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION
Montpelier Room, Capitol Plaza Conference Center, 100 State Street, Montpelier
December 16, 2008

The State Board of Education shall sustain a vision of high skills, creative thinking, and love of knowledge and learning for every student by setting education policy that ensures student achievement in a safe and healthy learning environment.

Approved Minutes – December 16, 2008

Present: Board Members: Chair Tom James; Vice-chair Ruth Stokes; Alex Melville; Chris Robbins; Brian Vachon; Kathy Larsen; Fayneese Miller; Susan Schill; Tess Savage (9:18)

DOE: Carol King; Jill Remick; Bill Talbott, Acting Commissioner; Mark Oettinger; Karin Edwards; Rae Ann Knopf; Marta Cambra; Tina Muncy

Other: Incoming Commissioner Armando Vilaseca; Sherry Gile, VTNEA; Daniel Mikelson, ACT; Angelo Dorta, VTNEA; Retta Dunlap, VBE; Jeff Francis, VSA; John Nelson, VSBA; Dave Larsen

Preliminaries

Item A: Call to Order, Pledge of Allegiance

Tom James, Chair, called the meeting to order at 8:54 a.m., and led the group in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Item B: Roll Call and Introductions

Board members introduced themselves, as did others in attendance.

Item D: Announcements, Board Member Updates (Chair, Board Members)

Kathy Larsen attended the November 20 Secondary Transformation Conference in Fairlee. She noted the variety of presentations and wealth of resources available to schools. Eighty percent of the state's high schools were represented at the conference.

Brian Vachon echoed Larsen's sentiments regarding attendance at the November 20th conference. He also reported on a meeting he attended with representatives from the state's construction industry and from Leahy, Welch, and Sanders' offices. The topic was the incoming Obama administration's proposed economic stimulus package and the feasibility of implementing it quickly enough to have the desired impact on the economy. Cathy Hilgendorf, DOE School Construction Consultant, also attended.

Chair James noted the announcement of the Nellie Mae Education Foundation's \$1 million grant, supported by the Gates Foundation, given to four states: Vermont, New Hampshire, Maine and Rhode Island, which occurred Monday, December 15th at the VSAC building in Winooski. The Governor was on hand to make the announcement.

Chair James also mentioned the upcoming March 12-13 National Association of State Boards of Education (NASBE) Legislative conference. He noted that three current board members terms will expire at the end of February but until those positions are filled the members can continue to serve.

Item E: November Monthly Report

Chair James reminded those present that the monthly report has been used for the past several years and that it is another manner in which the Board communicates with constituents. It is available on the Web at: http://education.vermont.gov/new/html/board/schedule.html#monthly_reports. James encouraged all to look at the monthly report via the department Web site to stay informed on what is going on with the Board.

Item F: Public to be Heard

Retta Dunlap, of Vermonters for Better Education (VBE) and a homeschool advocate, spoke to the Board about an executive summary of a paper she authored on homeschooling. She provided the Board with a handout. Within the survey conducted to collect information for the paper, she noted that she asked questions in the context of Transformation. She stated that for many parents, homeschooling is actually a second choice, when public or private schools did not meet their expectations. She also was at the Nellie Mae Education Foundation announcement and asked about the support of the Board for school choice.

Item G: Discussion with Commissioner-Designate

Armando Vilaseca, commissioner-designate, spoke with the Board about his transition and responded to questions from Board members. He shared his excitement for working with the Board to improve education in Vermont. He has been spending some time each week at the DOE with staff, learning about issues and getting up to speed on the work of the department. Board members asked about his involvement in the budget development process, his priorities as commissioner, including how the DOE is going to transform internally with limited resources, and issues of efficiency that may be addressed with Transformation.

Item H: Commissioner's Update

Bill Talbott, Acting Commissioner, noted this will be his last meeting as acting commissioner, because Vilaseca begins in time for the January 20 Board meeting. He noted that the DOE staff is incredible and dedicated. He reported that during the tough budget discussions staff came forward with ideas to save money and have rallied. He spoke about the two video messages he did to staff that were well received and more personal than an e-mail alone. He also read from an e-mail about a meeting held statewide using LNV, the videoconferencing network, so no one drove anywhere and it saved money and time.

Action Items

Item I: Consent Agenda

Document(s): Consent Agenda Items

Motion: Chris Robbins moved, Susan Schill seconded, to accept the consent agenda with comment.

1. **Minutes of November 17, 2008 Special SBE Meeting**
2. **Minutes of November 18, 2008 SBE Meeting**
3. **Minutes of November 20, 2008 Special SBE Meeting**
4. **Independent School Approval** (Pat Pallas Gray; Kerry Garber)
 - Acknowledgement of School Closing**
The Greater Burlington YMCA, Burlington
 - Acknowledgement of Independent School Program Change**
Meadows Educational Center, Brattleboro
5. **Annual Construction Aid Budget Request and Prioritized School Construction List** (Bill Talbott, Cathy Hilgendorf)
6. **Springfield College's Certificate of Degree-Granting Authority** (Laura Glass)

The motion was approved unanimously (8-0).

Item J: Ratification of Hearing Officer's Decision (Tuition Appeal) (Mark Oettinger)

Document(s): Confidential

Motion: At 9:25 a.m., Kathy Larsen moved, seconded by Ruth Stokes, that the Board move into executive session, including Mark Oettinger and Armando Vilaseca. The motion was approved unanimously (8-0). At 9:47 a.m. the Board came out of executive session. **Motion:** Ruth Stokes moved, seconded by Chris Robbins, to ratify the recommendation of the Hearing Officer in re Tuition Appeal 08-02. The motion passed unanimously (7-0).

Discussion Items

Item K: FY 2009 Budget Update & FY 2010 Budget Development (Bill Talbott)

Document(s): Handout only

Discussion: Talbott reported that of the \$13.3 million of the FY 09 general fund budget, 45 percent goes out in grants: \$5 million to adult education and literacy, early education and child nutrition. He did not reduce the child nutrition grant, but did take some out of other areas. The discussion was either grants or positions. He and staff worked to put together a budget proposal for FY 09 that reduced the general fund budget with shifts: \$320,000 in driver education and \$54,300 in technical education youth leadership grants were moved to the Education Fund. Talbott distributed the FY 09 budget rescissions as proposed on Monday (see handout). He stated that he still has to develop the FY 2010 Budget with an additional eight-percent reduction, noting that cutting positions should be an absolute last resort. James asked if there were any things that the Board could do to reduce their expenses. Talbott responded that staff would look for possible areas that could be reduced, i.e. alternate meeting sites.

Item L: January 2009 Legislative Considerations (Bill Talbott, Mark Oettinger)

Document(s): None

Discussion: Bill Talbott and Mark Oettinger led the Board through the discussion on the 2009 Legislative plans. They include a technical corrections bill (list to be determined), plans to keep the Legislature informed on Transformation, the 34-point plan to protect children from adult predators, and an item on bullying, notably cyber-bullying. Oettinger also mentioned PreK rules and Do Not Resuscitate (DNR) options for terminally ill children.

Transformation of Education

Item M: Education Transformation Update (Bill Romond)

Document(s): None

Discussion: Bill Romond updated the Board on Transformation activities. At the January 20 SBE meeting, a list of recommendations for membership on the policy commission will be presented for the Board's approval. Romond noted that there is a lot of interest in this topic. Kay Charron will be the DOE point person for the commission. Fayneese Miller encouraged DOE staff to expand the pool of who they will appoint to provide variety and not continue to use the same names that come up frequently.

Romond explained the Nellie Mae Education Foundation grant which supports the creation of the New England Secondary School Consortium, made up of Maine, New Hampshire, Rhode Island and Vermont. He discussed their four focus areas – policy, alignment of standards, performance assessment and alignment of standards to international benchmarks. Vachon asked that the Board be kept current of the Consortium's work. If the four states can demonstrate that they have developed something affective, there is the potential for future funding, and the possibility of Connecticut and Massachusetts joining in the work.

Romond also noted the success of the November 20 secondary transformation conference, representing 80 percent of high schools and technical center teams. Regional follow-ups and an online survey are being planned. Kathy Larsen requested that Board members be informed of the regional meetings and suggested that administrators be invited to submit answers to questions at regional meetings as well as via the online survey.

Romond also distributed draft Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) policy documents.

Item N: Future Agendas (Bill Talbott, Carol King)

Document(s): Handout

Discussion: Carol King worked with the Board to create the future agendas. The January 20 meeting will also be held here at the Capitol Plaza. James suggested they work closely with the Vermont School Boards Association on the specifics of implementation of Transformation.

Vachon suggested the Board use meetings more efficiently to reduce workload on the department and spend more time focused on action items. The Board discussed the decision making for agendas and how to best utilize written reports versus presentations. For three Board members, the February meeting will be their last.

Adjourn: Robbins moved, Miller seconded to adjourn the 12/16/08 meeting of the State board of Education at 11:21 a.m. The motion passed unanimously (8-0).

Minutes recorded by Jill Remick
Minutes prepared by Carol King